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ABSTRACT

A three-phase research project involving eighth-grade students seeking to examine the potentialities of managed self-instruction in introductory modern language courses at the early secondary level is reported in this paper. Problems inherent in the development of instructional systems and differentiated language learning modes are explored with emphasis placed on the review of the role of professional and paraprofessional personnel in the experimental research. For interim reports of this research project, see ED 033 632 and ED 040 642. (RL)

A THREE-YEAR RESEARCH PROJECT ON INDIVIDUALIZED FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING BASED IN PROGRAMMED INSTRUCTION AND IN MANAGEMENT BY CONSULTATION--SUMMARY OF RATIONALE AND PRINCIPAL FINDINGS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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This research rests on three premises: 1) the paternalistic autocracy of the traditional teaching role is increasingly more inappropriate and unacceptable in a society which is undergoing advanced democratization; 2) withdrawal of responsible supervision, direction, and guidance by competent instructional leaders is equally inappropriate and intolerable; 3) society demands that true equalization of educational opportunity be implemented, and, at the same time, that excellence of performance be achieved to the various measures of individual difference. Specifically, the attainment of excellence by anyone must not restrict the opportunity of others, nor must the opportunity afforded the many limit the achievement of excellence by anyone. A true individualization of learning, tailored to the needs and capacities of each person, would seem to hold the only hope for resolving this paradox.

The social phenomena and issues underlying these premises are being widely debated through the media and in national best-sellers. At this point in time, the national debate seems to be converging on the crucial need for greatly extended <u>real</u> decision-making power among <u>all</u> strata of the population. The flow and eddy of discussion seems also to be converging on a crucial need for permitting young people, even at the earliest levels of education, to develop a consciousness of genuine control over their lives and deeds. Only thus, according to the apparently developing consensus, will excellence amid equality be achieved.

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The task of this research has been to find, through presently known and socially acceptable means, some ways to reconcile the dilemmas inherent in this problem. The research investigates individualized foreign language learning

based both in programmed instruction and in a system of managing the learning processes. Management is carried out by a variety of personnel, some of whom are or have been teachers of foreign languages. The system of management subsumes development of student volition and self-direction, student goal-setting, emotional support, contracting, supervision, monitoring, group and individual tutoring, supplementation, challenge, self-evaluation, and evaluation by consultant. Programmed instruction appears to provide the stability and continuity, and management the flexibility and diversity, which are vital components of the developing new system of instruction.

The continuing experiment of this research, which has completed three stages (by June, 1971) in Tucson Public Schools, is designed as a variable model to permit study of the potentialities of managed self-instruction in beginning foreign languages at the early secondary level. It is hoped that the introduction of a wide range of variables at different stages or in different aspects of the experiment will ultimately furnish evidence for sound judgment concerning wider application of the processes and techniques which the project employs.

In the first stage, conducted for three months[1], seventeen eighth graders in one school used programmed materials in French, German, and Spanish without a formal system of management. The participants were selected by high language aptitude, high ability, and proved maturity. Results in attitude and performance were positive.

The following year, modified largely by recommendations made by the first group, the second stage offered thirty similarly selected students in the same school the same programmed instruction with a basic system of management. Included in the system for the twelve students of French was weekly native-speaker consultation. The phase lasted for eight months. Results were generally positive.

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[1] Bockman, John F., "Evaluation of a Project: Independent Foreign Language Study by Selected Eighth Graders at Townsend Junior High School Using Programmed Materials, March 3 to May 23, 1969." RIE, March, 1970. ED 033 632.

It appeared, however, that motivation would have been a better criterion for selection of participants than either aptitude or ability. It appeared, also, that results would have been improved if participants had been actively engaged in goal-setting. The experience of the twelve students of French highlighted the significance of the weekly native-speaker consultation as a component of the management system.

Findings of the first two phases of the research were reported.[2] Most participants tolerated the relative boredom of programmed learning for a long period of time and found the experience generally satisfying and profitable. There was a growth of positive attitude toward the processes of independent programmed learning in the year following separation from the project and during regular classroom foreign language study. Most student reaction, both at the termination of the first phase and a year later, showed a balanced perception of strengths and weaknesses in this mode of study. All students strongly approved the opportunity to set their own learning pace. A majority expressed willingness to tolerate the monotony of programmed learning to gain a perceived worthwhile objective.

A statistical comparison of listening and reading proficiency raw scores of the twelve students of French in the second phase and two regular classes of French, one in another junior high school and one in a high school, showed no significant difference among all three means in listening, and no significant difference between the means in reading of both junior high groups, although the regular high school group scored significantly higher in reading. There is evidence that in time and effort actually expended, programmed learning may be more efficient than classroom learning, but that one year of programmed learning

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[2] Bockman, John F., "Townsend Junior High School Independent Foreign Language Study Project: A Second Evaluation and Project Report." RIE, November, 1970. ED 040 642.

in the eighth grade alone probably cannot be equated with a year of study in the high school because of the lesser amount of actual study time available. (Efforts are now made to enlist seventh graders into the project to permit two consecutive years of study.)

The per capita cost of managed self-instruction was considerably less than regular instruction, since the system of shared management permitted implementation without the addition of new certified personnel.

These and other lessons learned in the first and second stages, some of them suggested or confirmed by participants themselves, were used to refine management techniques for the third stage. In the subsequent school year (1970-71), six schools offered individualized foreign language study to about 100 seventh and eighth graders under somewhat different circumstances in each school. Individuals began programmed learning when they were ready, and were generally free to discontinue at will, although this rarely occurred.

Improved management techniques enlisted a greater variety of program "managers" than was originally contemplated. Assisting in management teams were native-speaking housewives, University students, practice teachers, teacher aides, foreign language teachers, teachers of other subject areas, librarians, counselors, school administrators, and the district coordinator. Depending on the nature of gradually revealed need, certain students worked almost completely independently, given only infrequent emotional and interactive support. Others studied under considerable supervision and were given much individualized help. In time, however, most students appeared to develop powers of self-direction, self-reliance, and responsibility for goal-setting, use of time, and goal-attainment unusual for this age group under normal school conditions. In the event their work fell short of expectations, they were also generally able to identify precisely why and how they had personally failed to reach certain desirable objectives. As a group they refrained from blaming any individual

or circumstance for their own failure to reach objectives as so often occurs under normal school conditions. They exhibited a good critical judgment concerning improvements which might be made in the design of this project.

Through this research, Tucson Public Schools has gained practical experience in developing what amounts to a set of differentiated language learning modes through management by teams of professional and para-professional personnel. These experiences would appear to be valuable in providing opportunities for the achievement of excellence when the general condition exists that all interested students are allowed to attain success within the limits of their personal capacities and value systems.

In addition to descriptions of the research design and significant findings, the previously cited reports include the original proposal and letter to parents, a list of regulations, explanation of problems encountered in implementation, tables of results of attitudinal questionnaires answered by participants, comments and evaluative statements of participants and three school counselors, a record of the amount of work in programs completed by participants, scores achieved, and a follow-up study of first-phase participants.

March 16, 1971